

Those who enter Arrowhead from the east are treated to a panoramic view. The stadium sits below, and in the distance is the Kansas City skyline. As the Missouri motorcade inched along Blue Ridge Cutoff and made the right turn into the parking lot, passengers inside the library-quiet buses went dead silent. A haze hung over the lots, smoke pillowing from tailgate parties in the frigid, late-afternoon sky. Flags whipped in the wind. A glow emanated from the stadium. Even the hyper-focused Pinkel did a double-take.

“The greatest feeling was driving up in our buses,” he says, his voice rising. “It was unbelievable. *Un-be-lievable*. Fans were running up and hitting the buses. There were roars and cheers. You went by the Kansas people and it was just the opposite. The environment was as good as it will ever get.”

Adds Wolfert: “It was surreal. We came in from the top of the hill. Cars, tents, flags blowing in the wind. It was really dark, but there was this glow coming from the stadium. You’ve got people yelling at your bus, you’ve got people cheering for your bus, you’ve got people flipping you off.

“The bus rides are quiet, but they’re quiet for the right reasons. Coming into the venue, you’d think that everybody would get pumped, but there are so many opportunities to get excited, and if you let that happen, you’re going to be exhausted before the game even starts.”

Daniel? “This is what football’s about,” he recalls thinking.

Because he never took a snap, Patton remembers the drive into the stadium as much as he does details from the game. “The scene—there was nothing like it,” he says. “You could feel the hostility in the air.”

It was some party. It was also Patton’s 22nd birthday. He couldn’t have imagined a better present than being the starting quarterback in the biggest game in Missouri football history. Asked what he would have been thinking when he signed his letter of intent in 2004 about the prospect of facing the Jayhawks on such a big stage, Patton says without hesitation, “I’ll be playing in that game.”

The Tigers’ late arrival might have rattled the Pinkel of old, but this was a changed man. He knew the last thing his players needed to see was a flustered coach. “We are very much about attention to detail,” he says. “When something like that is going on, I need to be very poised.”

The Kansas contingent didn’t fare any better with the bottleneck. Keegan caravanned over from Lawrence with other *Journal-World* staffers, and what should have been an uneventful one-hour drive turned into a three-hour ordeal. “I worked in L.A. for eight or nine years, so I dealt with traffic,” says Keegan. “Never have I dealt with anything like this.”

Oh, to be able to slip a blood-pressure cuff onto Mangino's arm as the Kansas buses idled. You want to talk about schedules and attention to detail? This was the guy who locked the *USA Today* college football writer out of a press conference because he was a couple of minutes late. Nevertheless, Mangino honored a commitment to do an interview with ABC when he stepped off the bus. "We were late, so that pissed him off," says Strauss. "But he did it. He hated those game-day interviews."

Mangino insists the delay didn't impact him, but others aren't so sure. "When things didn't go exactly right," says Strauss, "that would affect him."

Adds Keegan: "Not only did you have the buses being late, but then there's the anger that had to be building. It's like going to the first tee thinking about work. You're doomed."

Reesing stepped off the bus, looked directly into an ABC camera and shouted, "Showtime, baby!" Yet he was very much aware of the Jayhawks' predicament. "We pulled up and we started to realize, 'Hey, we're really behind,'" he says. "That cuts into your normal routine. We had to speed everything up. It definitely adds extra anxiety to the game."

At some point, Mangino must have been second-guessing the decision to stay in Lawrence on Friday night. (The following year, the Jayhawks bunked in Overland Park. They got to the stadium on time—and won a 40–37 thriller.) And, of course, he wouldn't have been dealing with this migraine if the game were being played in Lawrence. Certainly, that thought crossed his mind. He laughs.

"Being successful in football as well as in life is being able to adjust," Mangino says. "Those things happen. Stay calm. Let your coaches figure out how we're going to do it."

Peterson was roaming the jammed parking lots with Clark Hunt, Lamar's son and the Chiefs' chairman and CEO. To reduce the possibility of scuffles, the Chiefs drew a border of their own. KU fans were encouraged to enter from the west side of Arrowhead, the Mizzou faithful from the east.

"There was a lot of concern that these two schools have such a long rivalry it wouldn't be good for them to be in the parking lots at the same time," says Peterson. "I must tell you: Clark and I walked the lots that afternoon and evening. People were absolutely terrific. We didn't have one incident."

Looking back almost five years later, Peterson couldn't help but think about Lamar Hunt. "One of my biggest regrets is that he didn't live long enough to see KU–MU at Arrowhead," Peterson says.

My, how Hunt would have been impressed. It was quite the spectacle. Even 90 minutes before kickoff, Arrowhead was starting to fill up. That's about the time Ivey

gathers the Tigers' skill-position players, linebackers and defensive backs for early stretching exercises. When away from Faurot, Ivey tries to pick a corner of the stadium where the players can feed off the energy of their fans. He was stunned not only by the number of spectators who were already in their seats, but also by the noise they were generating. The atmosphere was unlike anything he had ever experienced as a player or a coach. He checked his pulse and looked in the eyes of the Tigers. He didn't like the feedback he was getting.

"My heart rate was elevated, and their eyes were dilated," Ivey says. "I thought, 'O.K., this is different. This is *different*. What can I do right now?' I gathered everyone and said, 'Let's just take some deep breaths.' We took three deep breaths—inhale, exhale. A lot of players had closed their eyes. They opened them up and you could just see—O.K., we're relaxed. We're ready now. Let's go."

Ask any Tiger for secrets to the program's success, and Ivey's name always comes up. He is so respected that players who have moved on to the NFL routinely return to Columbia for off-season training. "He worked his butt off to get us in the best shape and give our offense the opportunity to do what it needed—to be able to run no-huddle the whole game and just wear people down," says Patton.

Strength and conditioning, however, is only a small part of Ivey's job description. He is also involved in sports nutrition, and after the 2007 season, he began pursuing a PhD in sports psychology. That's when he came to understand what the Tigers were experiencing when they took the field that night.

"It was the arousal level," Ivey says. "We were too high. If your arousal level is too high, your performance drops. If your arousal level is too low, your performance is not the best. You want to be right in the middle. That's where you have maximized performance."

Once back in the cramped visitors' locker room, Ivey wasn't sure what to make of the players' mental state. "There were a lot of nervous guys," he says. "The butterflies were there. They were doing the best they knew how to get themselves ready. It was different. They didn't know if they should say something or be quiet."

Pinkel knew he had a team loaded with strong-willed leaders, but as he scanned the room, he was concerned. "We're pretty quiet anyway," he says, "but it was one of those things where you're looking around and thinking, 'Are they *too* wound up? Are they *too* focused?' "